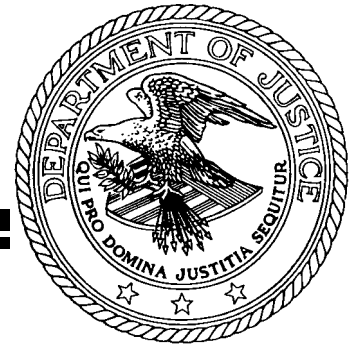


NEWS RELEASE



***OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
San Diego, California***

***United States Attorney
Carol C. Lam***

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For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY - April 30, 2004

United States Attorney Carol C. Lam announced that Jose Antonio Vasquez-Villasenor pled guilty today in federal district court in San Diego to bringing a group of undocumented aliens into the United States. According to the plea agreement, Vasquez-Villasenor's conduct led to the death of Department of Homeland Security, Bureau of Customs and Border Protection Agent James Paul Epling. Defendant Vasquez-Villasenor admitted that he and another individual smuggled a group of five Chinese nationals by attempting to reach Arizona by crossing the Colorado River during the evening of December 16, 2003. During the course of the apprehension and rescue of the group, Agent Epling, then 24 years of age, died of apparent drowning.

United States Attorney Lam said, "This office aggressively prosecutes smugglers who care more about money than the lives of those they prey upon. Our hearts go out to the family of Agent Epling, who gave his life to save the life of another."

The defendant is scheduled to be sentenced by United States District Court Judge Napoleon A. Jones, Jr. on Friday, July 23, 2004 at 8:00 a.m.

DEFENDANT

JOSE ANTONIO VASQUEZ-VILLASENOR

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Bringing in illegal alien resulting in death in violation of Title 8, United States Code, Section 1324(a)(1)(A), (v)(II) and (a)(1)(B)(iv) and Aiding and Abetting.

Maximum Penalty: Life Imprisonment; \$250,000 fine.

AGENCIES

Department of Homeland Security, Bureau of Customs and Border Protection, Yuma Sector
Department of Homeland Security, Bureau of Customs and Border Protection, El Centro Sector
Federal Bureau of Investigation, San Diego Division, El Centro Resident Agency
Federal Bureau of Investigation, Phoenix Division, Yuma Resident Agency
Yuma County Sheriff's Office
Imperial County Sheriff's Office
Yuma City Fire Department
Cocopah Police Department
San Bernardino Sheriff's Office
Rural/Metro Fire Department, Yuma
United States Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation
United States Marine Corps, Air Station Yuma
Maricopa County Medical Examiner and Forensic Science Center
Grupo Beta, Mexicali, Baja California
Mexican Immigration, San Luis, Sonora, Mexico
Baja State Judicial Police
Mexicali Police Department
Mexicali Fire and Rescue
Consulate for the Republic of Mexico